

Y. professor gives clues on herb facts and fallacies

PROVO — Contrary to popular belief, all herbs are not inherently good — and all drugs are not inherently bad.

That's the observation of Dr. Bruce H. Woolley, director of Brigham Young University's McDonald Health Center and teacher of a food science and nutrition class entitled "Herbs: Fact or Fallacy."

In the class, he gives an objective analysis of therapeutic and nutritional claims made for herbs and natural products by exploring the pharmacological, nutritional and medical viewpoints.

"What the students decide about these 250 herbs studied during the semester is their business," Woolley said. "At least they will have been exposed to some details about the herbs that they might not get elsewhere."

He has taught the class four times, but enrollment was limited because he required students to have had organic chemistry, as well as human anatomy and physiology. This semester he lifted

those requirements to reach a more general audience.

Once students have taken the class, they will be able to judge the validity of therapeutic claims made for various herbs, identify toxic reactions to various commonly used herbs, identify general categories of herbs, and match various herbs with their active constituents.

Woolley could talk about 2,000 herbs, but limits his discussions to the most common 250. He points out that about 50 percent of prescriptions written by physicians contain a natural product or a derivative of a natural product.

"This is particularly true of biologicals such as insulin, various hormones, certain injectables, and certain products used to treat infections," he said.

Woolley said herbs have been used for centuries to treat a wide variety of illnesses. The ancient Greek physician Hippocrates prescribed willow bark for pain and inflammation about 300 B.C. "He may not have known that the willow

bark contained salicin — a product similar to aspirin — but apparently he knew that it worked on pains and inflammations."

In the 1500s, Woolley said, the physician Withering began using foxglove plant for heart problems. "Today we use digitalis, a derivative from the foxglove plant."

The BYU professor said many people in the United States are using products derived from the aloe vera plant, a desert lily the Egyptians used thousands of years ago for skin care and embalming.

The aloe vera plant contains two primary parts: the fibrous skin and the clear, mucilloginous gel. Americans began using it in the 1940s for radiation and x-ray burns. However, the medical profession does not use it so frequently.

"Aloe vera is not good for acid-type burns," Woolley said. It causes a chemical reaction and aggravates the burn.

"However, it is excellent for use on superficial skin burns such as sunburns. It benefits the healing process and has antiseptic properties."

Woolley said certain combinations of drugs or herbs may cause adverse reactions. "Some herbs can interact with other herbs, foods or medicines, if taken in certain combinations."

The professor said many people take cayenne pepper, which is purportedly good for gastrointestinal problems. Cayenne reportedly prevents breakdown of pepsinogen to pepsin; therefore, it may have some value.

"However, it may also be a strong irritant to the mucous membrane and the gut lining," Woolley said. "This can cause severe problems. If a person uses cayenne, he should start with a small dose and work up to larger doses to produce a tolerance to the pepper."

"As far as we know, there is no valid study relating the use of cayenne to the prevention of cancer."

The health center director warns people about the dangers of chewing tobacco and using cocaine and other drugs.

He said that chewing tobacco has been shown to irritate the inner lining of the mouth. This irritation can lead to certain types of cancer.

"Cocaine, which comes from the plant *Erythroxylon coca*, grown in some tropical areas of the world, has anesthetic action but can produce a dependency and stimulative action," he said. Cocaine was formerly used in medicine, but now medical personnel have turned largely to other local anesthetics.

Woolley said that procaine, a popular local anesthetic, is purported to be an anti-aging drug and is on the market now as Gerovital or GH-3. "It hasn't been proven to retard aging; besides, many people using it call themselves 'naturalists,' and it's synthetic — contrary to most of their beliefs."

Humane Society has rules on spaying and neutering

Each week the Humane Society of Utah receives hundreds of inquiries concerning the organization's spaying and neutering services.

Humane Society officials say they welcome the questions and are anxious to serve the needs of the public. However, because many questions received are repetitious, Humane Society workers have prepared the following responses to commonly asked questions.

Q. What about immunizations?

A. All animals to be spayed or neutered must have a current distemper immunization, or new immunization must be given at least 10 days before scheduled surgery.

Q. How old should my pet be before spaying or neutering?

A. Female pets should be between the ages of 6 months and 5 years old. Males should be between the ages of 9 months and 5 years.

Q. What happens to my pet after I bring it in?

A. After scheduling an appointment, the animal is brought to the Humane Society's clinic the after-

years old, the Humane Society cannot do the surgery.

The Humane Society of Utah is

located at 4613 S. 40th West in West Valley City. The phone number is 968-3548.

The Utah State Historical Society has more members than at any time in its history, says membership secretary Debbie Dahl.

By the end of October, society membership had reached 3,240, 50 more than recorded at year's end 1981. With several weeks remaining in the calendar year, "we should top 3,300," said Mrs. Dahl.

About 40 percent of the current membership lives in Salt Lake City and other communities in Salt Lake County. Another 34 percent lives elsewhere in the state,

A record Historical Society membership

leaving 26 percent as out-of-state residents. "We even have 27 members living in foreign countries," Mrs. Dahl said.

She explained that all society memberships are entered on a calendar-year basis, which ensures that each member receives a complete volume of the Utah Historical Quarterly and simplifies the renewal process. A disadvantage to the system, said Mrs. Dahl, is that it tends to discourage new memberships late in the year.

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